

PART V

Crops

Major Crops

Because of the importance of livestock, dairy and poultry farming, a major part of the cropland is used for growing feed crops. Over 87 percent of the cropland in 1954 was used to grow hay and grass silage. Most of this feed is used directly on the farms and in the immediate locality to support dairy and beef cattle. The 4,404 acres of harvested cropland enumerated in 1954 were planted to the following specified crops listed in order of acreage importance: clover and timothy; grass silage; alfalfa and other hay; tree fruits, nuts and grapes; small grains cut for hay; oats and berries.

Crop Trends

The crop history of any farming region reflects to a large degree the economic changes occurring within it. A number of changes are apparent in the emphasis and acreage Mason County farmers have given to leading crops. These show the influence of new market outlets and improved rail and truck transportation in the Puget Sound Basin. They also show the influence of the

Total Acres of Land Harvested, 1954: 4,404 Acres

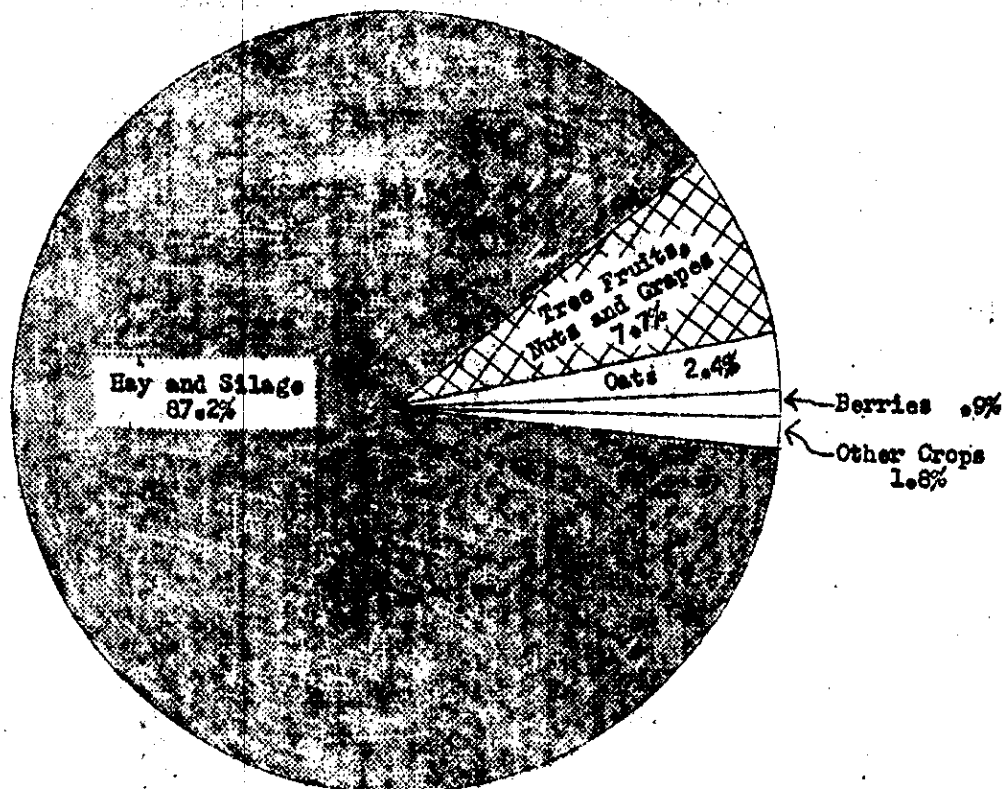


Figure 11.-- Percent of Total Cropland in Leading Crops
Mason County, 1954
(Based on U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954)

mechanization of agriculture and its consequent decrease in horses which formerly consumed large amounts of hay and grain. Changes in the crop patterns also result from farmers' experimentations with various crops and farm techniques for specific markets.

Since 1939 there have been several general trends in the crop program of Mason County farmers. The acreage in hay crops has decreased from 4,835 acres to 4,320 acres since 1939 although cattle numbers have been increasing. Much of the reduction of land for hay is the result of the increase in the use of grass silage as a winter feed for cattle. The acreage in commercial vegetables, tree fruits and grapes and commercial berries has fluctuated since 1939. All land in crops has decreased since 1939, according to Census data. In 1939, there were 5,605 acres harvested for crops compared with 4,404 in 1954. This indicates a trend in which harvested cropland has been diverted into permanent pastures, residential properties and other uses which do not produce a harvested crop. In specialty crops there have been decreases in strawberries, raspberries and blueberries but increases in grapes.

Hay and Silage Crops

For many years the most important crop in Mason County from the acreage standpoint has been hay. All types of hay and silage have been cut from between 3,835 to 4,630 acres. Clover and timothy, the most common types generally grown in mixture, have shown some fluctuation in number of acres

Table 16.- Clover-Timothy and Alfalfa Hay
Acreage, Yield and Production
Mason County, 1939-1955

Year	Clover and Timothy Hay			Alfalfa Hay		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)
1939	1,580	1.8	2,900	10	3.0	30
1940	1,400	1.6	2,290	10	2.0	20
1941	1,400	1.6	2,260	10	2.0	20
1942	1,800	2.2	3,900	10	2.0	20
1943	1,900	2.4	4,500	10	2.0	20
1944	2,030	1.9	3,800	10	3.0	30
1945	2,020	1.5	3,100	10	3.0	30
1946	1,980	1.8	3,500	10	2.0	20
1947	1,860	1.7	3,180	10	2.0	20
1948	1,990	1.9	3,780	20	3.0	60
1949	1,930	1.4	2,700	30	2.0	60
1950	1,800	1.6	2,900	40	2.0	80
1951	1,900	2.2	4,200	30	2.0	60
1952	1,900	2.4	4,600	30	3.0	90
1953	1,900	1.8	3,440	30	2.0	60
1954	2,100	1.7	3,600	40	2.0	80
1955	2,200	1.5	3,200	40	3.2	130

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Est. Divn.
State of Washington

harvested during the past 15 years with a low of 1,400 acres in 1940 and 1941 and a high of 2,200 acres in 1955. Wild hay and other hay comprise the next largest portion of hay land. Small grains cut green for hay have been on a downward trend since 1939. Acreage of grain hay in 1939 was at a peak of 1,602 acres compared with only 578 acres in 1949 and 288 acres in 1954. Acreage planted in alfalfa hay has been increasing since 1947 but still only totals 40 acres.

Grass silage is a rapidly growing farm practice in this area. It enables farmers to utilize green forage crops more efficiently and to lessen losses in hay quality from damp weather at harvest time. In recent years numerous farms have added silage cutters and installed pits and silos for storing silage. Nearly all of the hay produced on Mason farms is consumed within the county. Only 169 tons of hay from 11 farms were reported sold, with most of this being sold to neighboring farms. Mason farms import much of their alfalfa from surplus areas in eastern Washington.

Oats, Other Small Grains and Corn

The production of oats and other small grains on a commercial basis in Mason County has been somewhat limited by several factors. One of these factors has been the size of farm. Another is the high intensity of dairy and livestock farms which divert much of the land into permanent pasture and hay land. The acreage of oats has shown a slight decline since 1940 but production has remained fairly constant during this period because of relatively high yields. Acreage in 1945 was 190 acres as compared to 120 acres in 1955.

Table 27.- Oats and Barley: Acreage, Yield and Production
Mason County, 1939-1955

Year	Oats (grain)			Barley (grain)		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushel per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushel per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	60	43.0	2,580	--	--	--
1940	110	37.0	4,070	--	--	--
1941	170	41.0	6,970	--	--	--
1942	170	40.0	6,800	30	29.0	870
1943	200	41.0	8,200	30	28.0	840
1944	250	34.0	8,500	20	28.0	560
1945	190	30.0	5,700	20	24.0	480
1946	170	27.0	4,590	20	28.0	560
1947	160	27.0	4,320	20	29.0	580
1948	190	21.0	3,990	30	16.0	480
1949	110	20.0	2,200	20	13.0	260
1950	100	20.0	2,000	20	25.0	500
1951	140	18.0	2,520	20	28.0	560
1952	130	27.0	3,510	10	31.0	310
1953	130	26.0	3,380	10	32.0	320
1954	130	16.0	2,080	10	31.0	310
1955	120	27.0	3,240	10	36.0	360
1956	100	41.0	4,100	--	--	--

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Est. Divn.
State of Washington

Production totaled 3,240 bushels in 1955. Acreage planted to barley has been declining since 1942 and now totals 10 acres. Wheat, like barley, is grown on very few acres (10) and now has become unimportant as a source of farm revenue. Corn was produced on only 14 acres in 1954. Most of the corn was cut and used for silage, the remainder being grazed or cut for green or dry fodder.

Berries and Vegetables

Mason County is not self-sufficient in the production of vegetable crops and berries. Much of this is due to the terrain and lack of fertile soil needed in the production of commercial vegetables and berries. Also, much suitable land is used for hay and pasture. The production of vegetables has been decreasing since 1939 and now occupies only 11 acres. Nearly all vegetable crops are sold in local fresh markets with little or no processing being done. Over 360 of Mason County farms reported raising vegetables in gardens for home use in 1954.

Commercial berry acreage, mainly in strawberries, raspberries, loganberries and blueberries, constitutes a very small percent of total cropland harvested, being less than one percent. Berry acreage has shown a decreasing trend and now only 38 acres are used for growing commercial berries as compared with 82 acres in 1940 and 89 acres in 1950.

Table 18.- Berry Crops: Strawberries, Raspberries and Loganberries
Mason County, 1949-1955

	Strawberries		Red Raspberries		Loganberries	
	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons
1949 1/	10	20	3	7	45	150
1950 3/	10	20	5	7	40	50
1951 3/	15	20	2/	2/	40	60
1952 3/	15	30	2/	2/	40	70
1953 2/	2/	2/	2/	2/	2/	2/
1954 3/	10	20	10	15	25	30
1955 3/	5	8	5	13	25	25
1956 2/	10	8	2/	2/	30	16

1/ Census of Agriculture data.

2/ No data available for inter-censal years,
1951, 1952, 1953, 1956.

3/ Data from U.S.D.A., Agric. Estimates Division.

Tree Fruits, Nuts and Grapes

Mason County had a total of 337 acres planted in fruit trees, nuts and grapes in 1954. This is a decrease from the 470 acres in 1940 and the 537 acres in 1945. The number of fruit and nut trees of all ages on all Mason County farms in the last Census was: apples (2,317), filberts (1,319), plums and prunes (506).

Grapes were grown on 69 farms having a total of 98,500 vines. Most of the vineyards in Mason County are located near Grapeview on Puget Sound where a winery and several juice processing plants are maintained. The principal

variety of grape grown in this area is the Island Belle which is also grown in other parts of Washington. Mason County is fourth in the state in grapevines.

Census enumerations since 1940 have indicated a decrease in fruit and nut trees. Many orchards have been removed from lands that are suited for the growing of more profitable crops. Other orchards have gone into suburban residential property. Freezing weather in 1950 and 1955 killed numerous fruit trees which have not been replaced. In general, western Washington tree fruits are unable to compete in the market with Yakima County and other eastern Washington orchard areas.

Nursery and Greenhouse Products: Flowers, Bulbs and Plants

Sales from nursery products, flowers and flowering plants amounted to over \$38,000 in 1954. Although the acres planted to these products have decreased since 1950, the greenhouse space under glass has increased nearly six and a half times. The greenhouse business has shown a steady trend upward since 1939 with sales from this business amounting to \$36,400 in 1954 which was about 96 percent of the total sales from nursery and greenhouse products.

Table 19.- Horticultural Specialties: Nursery Products, Greenhouse Products, Flowers, Plants, Bulbs, Seeds, Mushrooms and other Special Plants
Mason County, 1939-1954

Census Year	Nursery Products (shrubs, trees and ornamentals)		Flowers and flowering plants, bulbs and seeds; vegetables, vegetable seeds, plants, mushrooms grown in fields and under glass for sale.		
	Acres Planted	Sales from Nurseries	Acres in open fields	Greenhouse space (square feet under glass)	Sales from farms during the year
1939	1/	1/	10	1,310	\$ 3,083
1944 2/	---	---	---	---	---
1949	8	2,411	15	8,600	\$24,815
1954	3	1,722	1	55,160	\$36,413

1/ Where less than 3 farms report, data are included only in State totals.

2/ No Census data are available for 1944.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture